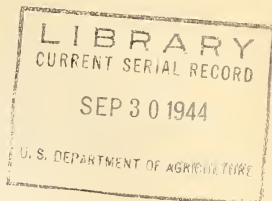


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A CONSUMERS' GUIDE TO U. S. STANDARDS FOR FARM PRODUCTS



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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
WAR FOOD ADMINISTRATION

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A CONSUMERS' GUIDE TO U.S. STANDARDS FOR FARM PRODUCTS

By Catherine M. Viehmann, information specialist,
Office of Distribution, War Food Administration

Homemakers are interested primarily in getting enough food. Because some commodities are scarcer than they were a short time ago, consumers are not so choosy about quality as they were before the war. But they still want to get what they pay for and to know what quality they are buying. The Federal standards are a reliable index to quality and can be of great help to the purchaser.

The official United States standards for farm products were worked out primarily for producers and distributors; but in accordance with the principle that any well-rounded farm program must take the consumers and their preferences into account, the Department of Agriculture is carrying these standards to consumers on a number of products.

Most consumers are not good judges of quality. This is so, even when the product can be seen and judged, as in the case of meats. If the product--such as canned goods--cannot be examined, consumers are at an even greater disadvantage.

For this reason many buyers want the name of the grade to be their guide to quality. This is a simple matter if the mark, tag, or certificate stays on or with a product until it reaches the consumer. Such identifying mark or label tells her the grade instantly and aids her in selecting the quality that best suits her purpose and purse.

Much of the interest in standards arises from the fact that many consumers have decided food preferences. Those whose incomes permit are usually willing to pay premium prices for commodities of high quality. Those whose incomes necessitate economy in buying, want to get the highest grade obtainable for the price paid. Because the quality of certain foods--eggs and butter for example--cannot be judged by their appearance in the store, it is difficult, if not impossible, for the consumer to identify either the highest grade or the highest grade obtainable for the price paid. Consumers also buy foods for their "use value" and want to buy those grades that are adequate for their particular needs--the high-grade peach for special use, the lower grade for pudding or pie.

The Office of Distribution of the War Food Administration, which is now responsible for the standardization of farm products, divides the list of standards of direct interest to consumers into two fairly well-defined groups. The first group includes those standards that can be readily used by the individual homemaker under certain conditions, because of the device or stamp, certificate, or other visual indication of grade. The second group includes those standards that are marked on some goods in wholesale markets and can be used as guides by such consumers as managers of restaurants and cafeterias and purchasing agents for institutions, who buy in quantity on those markets.

In the first group are the standards for beef, lamb, veal, poultry, canned chicken and other canned-chicken products, eggs, butter, cheese, rice, honey, and certain fresh, canned, and frozen fruits and vegetables, and dried fruits.

The second group includes the standards for most of the fresh fruits and vegetables and dry beans and peas. In the short discussions that follow, the factors that determine the grades of several commodities are given.

Standards for containers for fruits and vegetables are discussed on page 17.



With a roller stamp, Government graders mark meat with the grade. The stamping fluid is a harmless vegetable compound, which usually disappears when the meat is cooked.

MEATS

Meat specialists of the Department of Agriculture, in earlier years, directed much effort toward teaching homemakers and others how to select meat according to its desirability. Lectures, demonstrations, exhibits, publications, and posters were used. The need for providing consumers with a means by which they could select their meat according to its relative values stimulated these specialists to develop a simple method of identifying meat with the grade names.

This system gave persons who were not good judges of meat an easy, reliable means of choosing their cuts with confidence. Government experts on meat devised a roller stamp with which to mark each carcass with the grade name. The stamping fluid is a pure vegetable compound. It is entirely harmless and the imprint usually disappears when the meat is cooked.

USDA

U.S.
COMRCL

This stamp shows
that the meat was
federally graded.

U.S.
COMRCL

This stamp shows that
the meat was federally
inspected and passed as
wholesome food.



The grade stamp consists of a repetition of the grade name--Choice, Good, Commercial, or Utility--and is used on the entire length of the carcass. Thus, those parts that later become retail cuts bear the grade name.

The round purple stamp used in the Federal meat-inspection work is quite different from the grade stamp. The round stamp shows that the meat has been inspected and passed as wholesome food, as required by the Meat Inspection Act. Inspection is compulsory for all meat shipped in interstate commerce.

Before the war emergency, Federal meat grading was on a voluntary basis, that is, meat was graded only when the buyer or the seller requested it. Evidence of the popularity of such a service is shown by its growth from 1930 to 1941. In 1930 Government graders checked and graded 79,587,421 pounds of meat. By 1941 the quantity of meat so graded had increased to 868,116,818 pounds. Approximately 90 percent of all the meat graded during this period was beef.

Meat graded by Federal graders is used generally by the larger hotels, hospitals, steamship companies, Pullman dining cars, and numerous retail and wholesale meat dealers. At the beginning of the war both the Army and Navy adopted the Federal standards so that our armed forces could be provided with the grades of meat most desirable for their uses.

In order to facilitate the enforcement of various price regulations and to protect the consumer from having to pay high prices for inferior meats, the Office of Price Administration requires that all beef, veal, lamb, and mutton be graded in accordance with the United States standards. None but meat that is graded by Federal graders is stamped with the official grade name. Meat graded according to official standards by other persons, such as slaughterer or packer, is stamped with a letter, A, B, C, etc., to correspond with the official grade name.

Meat graded according to U. S. standards may now be purchased in all parts of the country. Whether federally graded meat will remain generally available after the present emergency has passed will depend largely on consumer demand for it.

BEEF

The U. S. official grades of beef are Prime¹, Choice, Good, Commercial, Utility, Cutter, and Canner. The letter symbols, approved by the OPA, that correspond to the U. S. grade names are: AA (Choice), A (Good), B (Commercial), C (Utility), and D (Cutter and Canner).

Beef is graded on the basis of those characteristics that provide the best indication of its relative desirability to the consumer. The degree of marbling (intermingling of fat through the lean), the texture, grain, color apparent in the cut surface of the lean, and color of bone are considered the best indicators of quality. Experience and study show that the quantity, character, and distribution of fat are also significant measures of quality. Consumers want to know how much edible meat, particularly lean meat, can be had from a given cut. In other words, they want to know the proportion of lean meat to bone. This is dependent mainly upon the shape and thickness of the carcass or cut. Thus it can be seen that the grade of beef is determined largely from the relative proportions of lean, fat, and bone, and from the age of the animal at time of slaughter.

Choice beef is produced from relatively young animals. It has a small amount of bone and relatively large amounts of both lean and fat. The large amount of fat is necessary to insure that it will have the tenderness, juiciness, and flavor so desirable to discriminating consumers. It is used chiefly by large hotels and restaurants that have a reputation for fine food.

Good, Commercial, and Utility are the three grades of beef available in most areas. Each has its own general characteristics which indicate different degrees of desirability. In general, the lower the grade the higher the percentage of bone and lean and lower the percentage of fat. Although the Choice grade represents the best for broiled steaks and oven roasts, the Good grade is nearly as satisfactory and is

¹For the duration, no beef will be graded "Prime." Beef of that grade will be stamped "Choice," in line with the maximum-price regulations of the Office of Price Administration.

usually available in large quantities throughout the year. The fat content is sufficient for the meat to be cooked in substantially the same way as the Choice grade, and the meat is slightly cheaper in price. Commercial and Utility grades usually are not best suited for oven roasts or broiled steaks, but lend themselves best to use for pot roasts, Swiss steaks, and stews--dishes that require long-time cooking. When prepared in these ways they are very acceptable.

Cutter and Canner--the lowest grades of beef--are not generally sold at retail but are used principally in the manufacture of the many different types of sausages. Certain cuts of these grades, however, are occasionally sold at retail in various sections of the country. Meat of these grades has a very high proportion of bone, has practically no fat, and is usually produced from older animals. It does not have all the palatability of the higher grades. But it should be remembered that all meat produced from healthy animals is highly nutritious and that with suitable preparation even the lowest grades can be made very palatable.

VEAL, LAMB, AND MUTTON

The U. S. grades of veal, lamb, and mutton are Choice, Good, Commercial, Utility, and Cull. Differences between these grades are similar to those between the grades of beef. Government graders place the grade names on the carcasses in the same manner as they do on beef carcasses. Although the volume of production is much less than that of beef, these meats are an important source of our total meat supply.

PORK

Standards for hog carcasses and cuts of pork have been developed. But, because there is less variation among market hogs in degree of fatness, age, and other characteristics, there has not been the same need for differentiating between the grades of pork as between those of other meats.

TURKEYS (DRESSED)

Turkeys have been graded for the Thanksgiving and Christmas markets since 1928. At first they were marked by grade for the consumers, either by stamping each bird or by labeling it with a grade tag. The grading is an optional service. During the first few years grading was done principally at terminal markets but more recently it has been done largely at shipping points, in cooperation with State agencies.

Usually, only the U. S. Grade AA, A, and B turkeys are marked individually with a grade tag but turkeys in Grade C may also be marked with their U. S. grade. The boxes in which graded turkeys are packed are stamped with the U. S. grade of the turkeys each contains, regardless of whether the individual turkeys are tagged. Approximately 67,000,000 pounds were graded during the fiscal year 1943.

The Department of Agriculture has experimented to find the best way to mark individual poultry carcasses with the grade. At first the grade was stamped on the back of each bird and a tag giving the grade and other information was attached to one wing. At present the grade name is printed on a label or tag which is attached to the individual bird by means of a seal that passes through the skin of the wing. The seal is so devised that it breaks when it is removed and therefore cannot be used again.

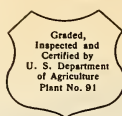
EVISCERATED POULTRY AND POULTRY PRODUCTS

A poultry inspection service is conducted by the Office of Distribution for poultry canners and firms that prepare ready-to-cook poultry for sale to consumers. The poultry used for these products is inspected for condition and wholesomeness by qualified veterinary inspectors, who examine all carcasses thoroughly and reject those that are unwholesome.

Firms that operate under this inspection service are permitted to use the following legend on labels or packaging materials: "Inspected and Certified by U. S. Department of Agriculture." Approximately 80 firms, located in Arkansas, California, Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota,



Fully dressed, ready-to-cook poultry may be packaged in individual cartons which are marked with the grade, class, and weight of the bird. The fryer in this carton was also inspected for condition and wholesomeness, as shown in the shield.



EVISCERATED

U. S. Grade--B--ROASTERS

Net Weight 34 lbs. 10 oz.

—DISTRIBUTED BY—
POULTRY COMPANY

Omaha, Nebraska

Lot No. _____

Class No. _____

Labels are used on containers to show that the poultry packed therein has been federally graded and inspected. Such labels do not usually carry through to consumers but are discarded when the retailer unpacks the birds.

Missouri, Nebraska, New Jersey, New York, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin now use this inspection service. Approximately 180,000,000 pounds of poultry was inspected for this purpose during 1943. These Government-inspected products are widely distributed, and homemakers in any of the larger cities and in many of the smaller towns should be able to obtain them.

In some plants eviscerated poultry that is inspected for condition and wholesomeness is also graded for quality. The official standards for eviscerated poultry are U. S. Grade A, U. S. Grade B, and U. S. Grade C.

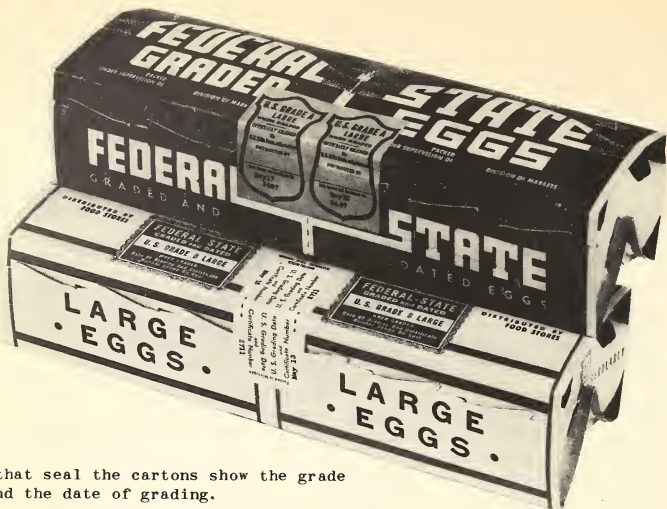
U. S. Grade A eviscerated poultry is the finest ready-to-cook poultry. Birds in this grade are of excellent table quality, have a high proportion of edible meat, and are satisfactorily dressed.

U. S. Grade B eviscerated poultry is ready-to-cook poultry of good table quality. As a rule, the birds are not so well fleshed as those in Grade A or they may have certain dressing defects.

U. S. Grade C eviscerated poultry includes birds that have relatively less meat, of lower quality, than birds in Grades A or B, or they may have more serious dressing defects than those in Grade B.

EGGS

Carrying the U. S. grades of eggs through to the consumers is done by means of certificates of quality and by grade seals. These show the U. S. grade, the size of the eggs, and the date graded, and the seals are used to seal the 1-dozen-size cartons in which the eggs are packed. The certificate or label bearing the letters U. S. shows the quality on the date of grading. Since the quality changes gradually, consumers should, when possible, purchase eggs within a few days after they have been graded. This date is on the carton.



The stickers that seal the cartons show the grade of the eggs and the date of grading.

The actual grading is done either by employees of the Office of Distribution of the War Food Administration or by employees of the cooperating State agency who have been licensed by the Office of Distribution.

The work is carried on in normal times in widely scattered areas, including Los Angeles, San Francisco, Portland, Oreg., Seattle, New York, Philadelphia, Cleveland, Columbus, Cincinnati, Detroit, Chicago, Baltimore, Boston, St. Louis, Indianapolis, Salt Lake City, Richmond, Asheville, N. C., and Washington, D. C. Consumers are apparently favorably inclined toward purchasing eggs plainly marked with the U. S. grades. The experience of the Office of Distribution in the use of the certificates of quality and grade seals indicates that the method has definite advantages in providing for the consumer the particular qualities she desires.

Four grades of eggs are identified by label for consumers. These are U. S. Grade AA, U. S. Grade A, U. S. Grade B, and U. S. Grade C.

U. S. Grade AA is found only on a few markets. The quality requirements for this grade are very high. They are especially suitable for the diet of convalescents and for other highly discriminating consumers. The yolk is well-rounded and the white is clear and thick and stands up well around the yolk when the egg is broken out.

U. S. Grade A is the highest available at most markets. Eggs of this grade are very satisfactory for breakfast eggs. The yolk is well-rounded and free from defects or blemishes. The white is clear and nearly as firm as that of a Grade AA egg.

U. S. Grade B eggs are used both for table and for cooking. The yolk may be somewhat flattened and show a definite but not serious mottled appearance and slight germ development. The thick white is less firm and spreads out more than in higher grade eggs. It is a good general-purpose egg.

U. S. Grade C is the lowest grade of edible eggs. The yolk may be flat and the white, very thin and watery. The thin white is preferred by many consumers, since it beats up more readily than the firm white in a fresh egg. The best use of this grade is for general cooking purposes.

Storage Eggs.--Under the regulations of the Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act storage eggs of any grade cannot be shipped as "Fresh eggs" in interstate commerce, nor may descriptive terms which are misleading be used with storage eggs.

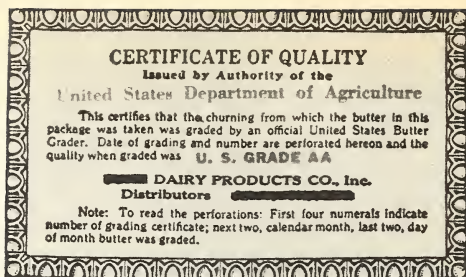
BUTTER

Much work has been done by the Department in carrying the U. S. grades of butter to consumers. Cartons of certain widely distributed brands of high-quality butter contain certificates of quality which show the grade of the butter as determined by an authorized representative of the U. S. Department of Agriculture. About 175 firms are authorized to use such certificates. Sales of butter with certificates of quality have been averaging about 87,000,000 pounds each year.



The grade name plainly marked on a carton of butter aids the homemaker to select the quality that best suits her purpose and purpose.

Officially graded butter is accompanied by a certificate of quality which shows the grade of the butter and the date the certificate was issued.



A consumer who buys butter that carries a certificate of quality issued by authority of the Office of Distribution is likely to get a product of higher quality than if she had bought butter without such a certificate. Although a great deal of butter that is sold without a quality certificate is just as good as the butter that bears one, a large quantity is sold that could not meet the high-quality standards required to obtain the certificate. The certificate shows the score or U. S. grade which indicates the quality, and the date it was issued.

Certificates of quality on butter are limited to U. S. Grade AA (U. S. 93 score) and U. S. Grade A (U. S. 92 score).

U. S. Grade AA must have a highly pleasing flavor and be made from cream having a fine, sweet flavor. This is the best table butter available.

U. S. Grade A must have a pleasing and desirable flavor and can be made only from cream that has a clean, pleasing flavor. It is a high-quality product suitable for discriminating consumers.

PROCESSED FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

Simple names (Grade A, Grade B, and Grade C) have been given the grades developed by the Department for processed fruits and vegetables. These grades are now used in connection with the inspection and grading of canned fruits and vegetables under the Agricultural Appropriation Acts and the United States Warehouse Act.

The simplicity of the names and the fact that the grades have been widely and successfully used as the basis for determining loan values have led some to believe that the A- B- C-grade names are acceptable for use on labels. Some canners and several distributors are now labeling their products with these terms in order that the consumer may be apprised of the quality of merchandise in the can. A few canners are placing on the label additional information descriptive of the product in the can, such as the number of pieces in a can of pears, sieve size of peas, strength of sirup on fruits, and number of servings.

Any canner or distributor may use the terms "Grade A," "Grade B," or "Grade C" on labels to designate the grade of the commodity. This type of labeling is not mandatory, but products thus labeled must meet the specifications of the U. S. standards for the grade claimed.

The Department feels that grade and informative labeling is particularly desirable, as it enables the consumer to make selections actually on the basis of the quality preferred.

In general, Grade A represents the best quality of fruits or vegetables. For this grade the products are carefully selected as to size, color, degree of maturity, and freedom from blemishes.

Grade B fruits or vegetables are of excellent quality but may not be so uniform in color, size, and tenderness as those of Grade A. This grade may be termed the general-utility grade and will be found very satisfactory for use in the average household.

Grade C fruits or vegetables are good, wholesome, and nutritious food and have a definite value.

Some canned fruits and vegetables are below Grade C in quality. If they are wholesome, nutritious, and acceptable in flavor and are labeled to meet the regulations for such foods established under the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act, they may be sold on the retail market. They may serve a real need at low cost.

Grade A canned corn, for example, is very generally used as a side dish, Grade B may be used for making pudding and casserole dishes, and Grade C is a basis for excellent soup.

In the cream-style canned corn the U. S. Grade A product will be prepared from young, tender sweet corn. It will be bright and have a heavy, creamlike consistency and will be practically free from such defects as silks, husks, and off-color kernels.

For U. S. Grade C canned corn only fairly tender sweet corn need be used, the color may be dull, and the consistency somewhat thin, or somewhat thick, indicating an insufficiency of moisture. The product must be fairly free of silks and husks.

A, B, C grades for canned goods have been developed for the following commodities: Apples, apple juice, applesauce, apricots, asparagus, beets, blackberries, carrots, red sour pitted cherries, sweet cherries, corn (cream style), corn (whole-grain style), dry beans, fruit cocktail, fruit preserves (or jams), fruits for salad, grapefruit, grapefruit juice, blended grapefruit and orange juice, extracted honey, Kadota figs, lemon juice, lima beans, mushrooms, okra, olives, orange juice, concentrated orange juice, peaches, peanut butter, pears, peas, pickles, pimientos, pineapple, pineapple juice, plums and prunes, pumpkin (squash), red raspberries, sauerkraut, snap beans, spinach, sweetpotatoes, succotash, tomatoes, tomato catsup, tomato juice, and tomato pulp.



The prefix "U. S." before the grade name means that the product was packed in a plant under the continuous inspection of the USDA. Government inspectors are on duty all the time the plant is in operation, observing each step in the preparation of the product.



Canners who use the terms "Grade A," "Grade B," or "Grade C" on labels, are responsible for seeing that the quality of the product in the can meets the requirements for the specified grade as defined by the USDA. Otherwise, they are liable to penalties for mislabeling, provided under the Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act.

Grades for frozen fruits and vegetables include asparagus, lima beans, snap beans, broccoli, cauliflower, red sour pitted cherries, whole-grain corn, peas, red raspberries, spinach, and strawberries.

More recently grades have been issued for dried fruits--apples, apricots, currants, peaches, pears, prunes, and processed raisins.

For these also the designations Grade A, Grade B, and Grade C are used. It is expected that grades for additional commodities will bear similar designations.

Some canning factories are operating voluntarily under continuous factory inspection--a service offered by the United States Department of Agriculture at a nominal fee to packers. These factories have been carefully selected and thoroughly inspected to make sure that they meet strict sanitary requirements. Food products packed under continuous inspection carry the prefix "U. S." before the grade designation on the label, as well as the statement "Packed under the continuous inspection of the U. S. Department of Agriculture."

Consumers can now buy grade-labeled goods--with or without the "U. S." prefix--in many retail stores throughout the country.

FRESH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

Federal standards for practically all fresh fruits and vegetables have been worked out (93 standards for 62 fresh fruits and vegetables). Although these standards have been used mainly in wholesale transactions, their use has brought about improvement in the quality of products shipped to market. As a result, the consumer is getting increasingly better produce for every dollar spent for it. And the producer is benefiting through the better prices that many consumers are willing to pay for guaranteed quality.

Certain groups of consumers, however, have not been entirely satisfied with the quality of the produce they have been obtaining and frequently have asked "Why can't we buy fresh fruits and vegetables at retail by U. S. grade designation?"

POTATOES, ONIONS, APPLES, CITRUS FRUITS

Before the war the packing of some of the less perishable products, such as potatoes, onions, apples, and citrus fruits, in consumer-size packages branded with the U. S. grade designation had increased materially. It is believed in the Department that produce packed to meet requirements of U. S. Fancy or U. S. No. 1 grade is generally satisfactory to consumers. The big problem is to have the products meet such requirements at the time they are offered for sale to consumers in the retail stores.

Because of the higher labor costs in the cities and the lack of packing facilities, it is more economical to put up consumer packages of

produce at shipping points. Fruits and vegetables, however, are more or less perishable and packages of some products meeting the requirements of U. S. No. 1 grade at shipping points will not contain U. S. No. 1 products when they arrive at the retail stores. Some specimens may decay or break down in transit, whereas others will be injured mechanically during transportation and handling. This is true even of the less perishable products, such as onions and potatoes. Unless the packaged products are reconditioned in the stores, some of them will fail to meet the grade requirements when offered to the consumers. Because the consumer who purchases such a package is dissatisfied with her purchase she is apt to criticize the requirements of the U. S. standards.

In spite of the apparent disadvantages of applying U. S. standards to retail quantities of fresh fruits and vegetables, the United States Department of Agriculture conducted several investigations to ascertain the adaptability of the U. S. standards to consumer use. One such study was made of U. S. potato standards in the Chicago area. Another was made in cooperation with the Farm Credit Administration and the Maine Agricultural Experiment Station to learn the causes and degree of damage in shipments of Maine potatoes that are packed in consumer packages and shipped to the Boston market. These studies indicated that potatoes that met the requirements of U. S. No. 1 grade at the time they were offered for sale in retail stores were generally satisfactory to consumers. The principal criticisms voiced by retailers and consumers were that some lots of potatoes packed in consumer packages were too small and in some lots the potatoes were not of uniform size. Neither criticism can be regarded as criticism of the U. S. standards for potatoes, for the standards permit the packing of any range of size. It was concluded that changes in the size requirements of the standards are not necessary and if consumer demands are to be met in this respect, growers and shippers will have to size potatoes more uniformly.

Analyses of several hundred consumer packages of potatoes revealed that a rather large number that had been packed to meet the requirements of a certain grade at shipping points failed to meet such requirements upon arrival in the retail stores. Some potatoes decayed or deteriorated in transit and there was some handling and transit damage. Also, it was found that many individual packages were slightly below grade at the time of packing although when the percentages of defects in such packages were averaged with those in other packages, the lot as a whole met grade requirements. If consumer packages are put up at shipping points, apparently growers and shippers will have to exercise more care in sorting out defective tubers. Such packages are less likely to be out of grade when they are offered for sale in the retail stores.

OTHER FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

Now we come to the second group of fresh fruits and vegetables, the grades and grade designations of which are not as yet carrying through to the retail markets. The producer does not usually mark the

grade on the container; of if the container is marked with the U. S. grade of the product, it or that part of it that bears the mark may be discarded by the retailer, or the mark may be removed and the container salvaged for re-use.

On most of the markets, many buyers who purchase wholesale containers of fruits and vegetables are asking for produce that has been packed to meet the requirements of United States grades. Frequently, when they look or ask for it, they are finding the grade marked on the container. The more they request it the more often they will find the grade name. An increased and insistent demand may mean that dealers on the wholesale markets will feature the U. S. grade mark.

Most of the fruits and vegetables are sold from bulk displays in retail stores where the buyer has the opportunity to select the quality that best meets her individual requirements. It is impossible to know exactly what proportion of retail purchases are made by personal selection but probably between 75 and 90 percent of them. If bulk displays of fresh fruits and vegetables, labeled as to grade, were to be offered to the consumers it would mean that an inspector or someone well trained to interpret the standards would have to inspect the produce each morning. Furthermore, someone would have to give close attention to the maintenance of grades in the displays throughout the day. At present, the facilities for training a corps of inspectors to handle the job are not available. Also, the expense would probably be prohibitive and consumers might not be willing to pay the extra cost of having the produce classified. The average consumer in selecting what she needs would be unlikely to take much notice of the grade marked on a lot. She would probably select individual specimens that appeared to be the best in the display regardless of any grade designation.

Under present methods of handling, it would be impossible to pack certain of the highly perishable commodities such as spinach, beets, strawberries, peaches, and tomatoes of a certain grade in consumer-size packages at shipping points and expect all of them to arrive in the stores in condition to meet the requirements of the same grade. Peaches and tomatoes that have deteriorated can be sorted out in the stores. But a package of peaches reconditioned for grade in the morning might not be up to grade in the afternoon, owing to the development of brown rot. In an attempt to recondition small fruits and berries one would probably do more harm than good in sorting them to remove damaged specimens.

BASIS OF GRADING

Grades are based upon variety, color, size, maturity, shape, and freedom from defects such as may be caused by dirt, freezing, disease, or insects or by mechanical means. Except for the injurious effects that disease, freezing, overmaturity, or rough handling might have on a product, there is no difference in the nutritional value of a grade 1 fruit or vegetable and a grade 2 product. The difference is mainly in

appearance, waste, and preference. And in marketing, consumers would do well to consider "use value." In the case of apples, for example, No. 1 apples might be selected for baking, No. 2 apples for applesauce.

Consumer preferences enter importantly into the description of grades. Fruits and vegetables that have a pleasing shape and color appeal to shoppers' appetites and loosen their purse strings.

For tomatoes, by way of illustration, there are two grades--U. S. No. 1 and U. S. No. 2. The requirements for U. S. No. 1 tomatoes are that they be of similar varietal characteristics, mature but not over-ripe or soft, fairly well formed, fairly smooth; free from decay and freezing injury and from damage caused by dirt, bruises, cuts, sunscald, sunburn, puffiness, catfaces, growth cracks, scars, insects, hail or mechanical injury, and free from visible disease when shipped.

The requirements for U. S. No. 2 grade, as compared with those for U. S. No. 1, are more liberal as to shape and smoothness and regarding those factors listed under damage in U. S. No. 1 grade. In the U. S. No. 2 grade, the tomatoes are required to be free from serious damage instead of free from damage.

DRY BEANS AND PEAS

Standards have been promulgated for all commercial classes of dry edible beans. Those standards are being used more and more widely by the trade, but the grade is rarely applied to consumer sales by retailers. The grades U. S. No. 1 and U. S. No. 2 apply to a large part of the marketable supply. Special grades for "Handpicked," quality beans are provided. These grades have special application to consumer sales in cellophane packages and cartons. Consumers, therefore, would promote the sale of beans of higher quality by asking for the grades U. S. Choice Handpicked or U. S. No. 1 Handpicked.

Dry peas (whole) and split peas also are marketed under U. S. grades. As is true of dry beans, peas lend themselves to consumer sales in cellophane packages and cartons. Consumers' interest may encourage the use of the U. S. grades in designating the quality, for example, "U. S. No. 1 Green Split peas."

RICE

Milled and brown rice can be bought by Federal grade. Retail packages are seen on the grocery shelves carrying these grade names although the "U. S." before the grade name does not appear on all the labels. For milled rice, the five official grades used in the retail trade are Extra Fancy (U. S. No. 1), Fancy (U. S. No. 2), Extra Choice (U. S. No. 3), Choice (U. S. No. 4), and Medium (U. S. No. 5). For brown rice, the official grades used in the retail trade are Extra Fancy, Fancy, and Choice for rice produced in the Southern States, and Fancy, No. 1, and No. 2 for rice produced in California.

HONEY

To a limited extent, and chiefly in the Middle West, consumers can find "U. S. No. 1" or "U. S. Fancy" stamped on containers of comb honey in retail stores. The stamping is usually done on the cellophane wrapping. In Ohio it is rather common to find comb honey that is offered in individual sections stamped "U. S. No. 1." Relatively little extracted honey is sold with U. S. grade terms stamped on the bottles. The wooden cases in which the extracted honey is packed are sometimes stamped with the grade term and a few individual beekeepers and bottlers place U. S. grade stamps on their glass jars.

CONTAINERS

Standards for some containers have been established by Federal laws. In 1913, when standardization work on farm products was making a good start, the Department had constant queries from homemakers and from interested groups in the trade as to whether anything could be done to eliminate the nuisance of "snide" berry and fruit boxes. Frequently when they emptied out a box of berries or other small fruits, the homemakers complained, they found the bottom set high in the box. These and similar practices kept them from receiving the quantity for which they had paid.

Several years ago, Congress passed a law that established a standard barrel for fruits and vegetables and one for cranberries. Later, a standard-container law that prescribed the sizes for baskets for small fruits and vegetables in interstate trade was passed. About a dozen sizes of grape baskets formerly in use were reduced to 3, and 33 sizes of berry boxes and till baskets were replaced by 6 common sizes. Still later, another law was passed that standardized hampers, round stave baskets, and market or splint baskets. Nine sizes of hampers, for instance, now replace about 50 styles and sizes. Formerly when a homemaker bought a hamper of vegetables she did not know whether she was getting a full bushel or seven-eighths of a bushel, for the same price was usually paid regardless of the size of the so-called bushel hamper, because the difference in size was not evident. Market baskets, used on some markets in selling many commodities, varied widely in capacity and style but it was difficult to detect discrepancies by eye. The same styles are now allowed, but they must conform to 6 specified sizes in capacity.

These standard sizes, once set, have met with almost universal favor. Enforcing the standard-container laws, however, necessitates frequent surveys of manufacturers' operations and tests of their containers.

Crates, boxes, cartons, and sacks for fruits and vegetables are still unregulated as to size by Federal statute, in spite of the fact that they have become increasingly important and more diversified in shape and sizes. But, as a means of conserving materials, labor,



Confusion for consumers. Some cans look alike but hold different quantities, while some look different but hold the same quantities. As a war measure, the War Production Board has standardized can sizes in order to simplify production and conserve critical materials such as steel and tin.

transportation, and other facilities during the war emergency, the sizes of these containers are prescribed in limitation orders issued by the War Production Board.

The number of can sizes that may be used for packing food has been restricted by the War Production Board. In general, three sizes of cans are now used for fruits and vegetables--Nos. 2, 2½, and 10. Fruit juices and tomato juice are packed in No. 2, 3-cylinder (about 46 ounces), and No. 10 cans. Condensed and evaporated milk is usually sold at retail in cans holding 6 ounces and in cans holding 14 or 14½ ounces. A larger number of can sizes is permitted for fish and shellfish, and for meat and meat products, but the number now in use is smaller than before the war.

GRADE SPECIFICATIONS AVAILABLE

Specifications or descriptions of the grades of almost any farm product will be sent by the Office of Distribution to any consumer who writes for them and who designates the specific commodities in which she is interested. Some specifications that may be unsuitable for her use may still be suggestive of things to look out for when buying.

Huge sums are spent for promotional work by many large growers' organizations and many large firms engaged in retailing. Through displays, folders, and labels they are bringing the consumers much information that works to the advantage of all. Government grades are increasingly recognized as one means of carrying on such work. Some leaders in the Federal standardization work believe that eventually many of the U. S. grades will be carried to consumers chiefly through these large distributors and advertisers. Demand from the consuming end will do much to encourage such a development. Many cooperative growers' organizations and firms do not now see how they can profitably relate their brands closely with the official grades but there are signs that such a development may be coming.

SIMPLIFIED GRADE NAMES DESIRABLE

Perhaps the greatest need at present is for uniform and simplified grade names or designations that will readily give consumers the desired information regarding quality. Grade names adopted as a result of long-established practices in industry may not convey to consumers an understanding of the quality of the product. Alphabetical or numerical grade terms seem to be most acceptable to consumers. This has been shown by the great interest of consumers in the A, B, and C grades for processed fruits and vegetables. Linking alphabetical or numerical terms with more of the present grade names in order to make them more understandable and acceptable is receiving the consideration of standardization specialists.

Some consumers demand graded products; some don't. Those who do, will get them because in trade parlance "the customer is always right." Some consumers don't demand grades because they don't know about them. It has been reported that only 1 woman out of every 20 has received information about A, B, C grades from any group, club, union, or association. Those who don't know must be reached, for there cannot be the proper adjustment of price to quality until the individual consumer thinks in terms of quality, and buys on the basis of grades that signify quality.



PUBLICATIONS

For the following publications of interest to consumers, apply to the Office of Distribution, War Food Administration, Washington 25, D. C.

A Fruit and Vegetable Buying Guide for Consumers	M. P. 167
Containers for Fruits and Vegetables	F. B. 1821
Standardizing Standards (Containers for Fruits and Vegetables)	
Consumers' Guide Separate No. 34	
Simple as A B C (Quality Grading of Canned Fruits and Vegetables)	
Consumers' Guide Separate No. 36	
The A B C of Canned Fruit and Vegetable Labeling	M. P. 460
Continuous Factory Inspection and Labeling of Canned Fruits and Vegetables in Terms of U. S. Standards	(Processed)
Government Grading of Canned Fruits and Vegetables -- Questions and Answers	(Processed)
How Federal Grades for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables are being Adapted to Consumers' Needs	(Processed)
The Trend Toward Consumer Standards for Canned Fruits and Vegetables	(Processed)
Suggested Outline for Specifications for Purchasing Canned Fruits and Vegetables	(Processed)
Labeling Processed Foods in the Terms of U. S. Grades	(Processed)
Shall We Buy Canned Food by Guess or by Grade?	(Processed)
What Do These Mean? A Short Short Story About U. S. Grade A, B, C Labels	(Processed)
Standardization and Inspection of Farm Products	Yearbook Separate No. 1754
Check List of Standards for Farm Products	(Processed)
Federal Stamps and Labels on Meats	(Processed)
U. S. Graded and Stamped Meat	L. 122
Buying Beef by Grade	M. P. 392

Consumers' Guide is issued to aid consumers in understanding the over-all food-management programs, such as changes in prices, supplies and costs of food and farm commodities, rationing, and food-distribution orders and allocations, and to help them in making economical purchases. It acquaints consumers with efforts being made by individuals and groups of consumers to obtain the greatest possible value for their expenditures. It interprets to consumers the purposes and operations of the war food programs.

Leaders and members of consumers' organizations and others actively concerned with consumers' problems may be placed on the free mailing list so long as copies are available. Others may obtain copies from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington 25, D. C., at the subscription price of 50 cents a year, domestic; 70 cents a year, foreign.

"Consumer Time" - Saturday at 12:15 to 12:30 p. m., EWT - is carried from coast to coast by approximately 65 NBC stations. This program presents a dramatized story and discussion combined with the expert advice of a guest authority. These broadcasts present to the consumer the latest facts on the wise purchase and use of food, conservation, nutrition, rationing, clothing, and household equipment, together with practical tips on wartime living.

WAR FOOD ADMINISTRATION

Steps in Setting Up Quality Standards for Farm Products

